



MONROE PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT:	<i>Receive an update on the city gateway and wayfinding sign design concepts.</i>
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DATE:	DEPT:	CONTACT:	PRESENTER:	ITEM:
07/13/2020	Exec	Deborah Knight	Deborah Knight	Presentation

Discussion: 07/27/2020

Attachments:

1. West Gateway Sign Design Concept
2. Wayfinding Signage Assessment Report
3. Draft Historic Downtown Concepts

REQUESTED ACTION:

Receive an update on the city gateway and wayfinding sign design concepts.

DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND

Project Initiation

In 2017 the city formed an ad hoc Economic Development Advisory Board. The Board was charged with developing a set of recommendations and a 5-year investment strategy to support business recruitment, retention, and expansion. The Board reviewed past economic development plans including the Downtown Master Plan, Tourism Plan, and Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

In 2018, the city council adopted the Board's recommendations. One of the recommendations was to replace the city's aging gateway signs and develop a gateway and wayfinding sign program to greet visitors and residents with an attractive sign design that makes a good first impression; helps people navigate through the community; and promotes economic development by highlighting key destinations and attractions.

In 2019, the city issued a request for proposal (RFP) seeking a consultant to help the city develop its gateway/wayfinding sign program. Members of the Economic Development Board interviewed three firms and selected Tangram. Tangram has a successful track record working with cities. They were selected by Snohomish County to develop a wayfinding sign program for access points along the Snohomish/Skykomish River.

Project Goals and Scope of Work

The Economic Development Advisory Board identified several goals for the gateway/wayfinding sign program:

- Create a consistent system that uses a range of signage mediums
- Honor the city's past while establishing its future as a regional hub
- Direct visitors to landmarks, facilities, activity centers, and services
- Improve navigation for all modes of travel
- Reinforce the identity of the city as a regional center for food, lodging and entertainment
- Develop signs that can be fabricated using standard materials and methods; requiring minimal maintenance and long-term endurance
- Be sustainable and expandable.



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The contract scope of work included:

1. Design concepts for gateway signs at key entry points to the city – US 2; West Main Street; East Main Street; and SR203.
2. Design concepts for wayfinding signs that help visitors and residents navigate through the community
3. Design concepts for parks signs

*While developing wayfinding sign concepts, Tangram also developed several alternatives for gateway signs for the city's historic downtown which were not included in the original scope of work.

Design Process

Tangram started the project with an on-line survey early in the process to get public input and understand the community vision for the city's gateway and wayfinding sign program. Key themes emerged from the survey:

- A desire to change/update Monroe's image
- A preference for clear, visible, simple, modern, and relevant aesthetic
- An interest in creating a sense of place
- Improving the visitor experience
- Enhancing the streetscape
- De-cluttering the visual environment
- Providing safety and security

Over the course of six months, Tangram worked with the EDAB to develop multiple variations for the City of Monroe's gateway at the roundabout located at the intersection of Main Street and the 522 exit ramp (West Gateway). Based on comments Tangram received from the EDAB, specific design directions were developed. Below is a rendering of the final design for the West Gateway recommended by the EDAB.



At the last EDAB meeting in June, the Board reviewed and provided feedback on a monument style design for East Main Street (East Gateway) and a smaller version of the West Gateway sign for the South Gateway located on SR203 at Lewis Street Park.



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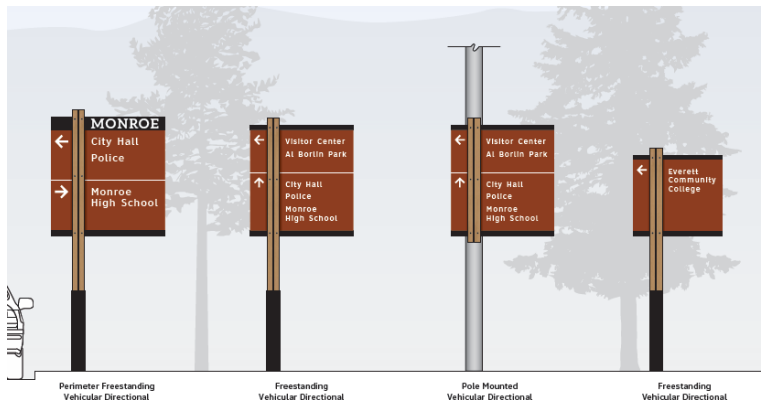


The Board recommended moving the wayfinding sign (in the background) further to the north to avoid competing with the gateway sign, and replacing the flat rock on the sign with round river rock to emulate the natural rock found in the Skykomish River in Monroe.

The Board anticipates receiving the final round of gateway design concepts before its next meeting on July 23.

Wayfinding Sign Design

Tangram completed an assessment of the city's existing signage and wayfinding challenges (Attachment 2). The report includes recommendations to resolve wayfinding issues and opportunities to enhance the visitor experience. Observations and recommendations made through the assessment were used to provide a plan and framework for developing wayfinding design concepts.



Tangram submitted six initial wayfinding signage concept designs at the EDAB's June 4, 2020 meeting.

Wayfinding signs included variations in materials (wood, rock, metal, and color). The EDAB members provided feedback. The next round of wayfinding signage concepts are expected in early July.

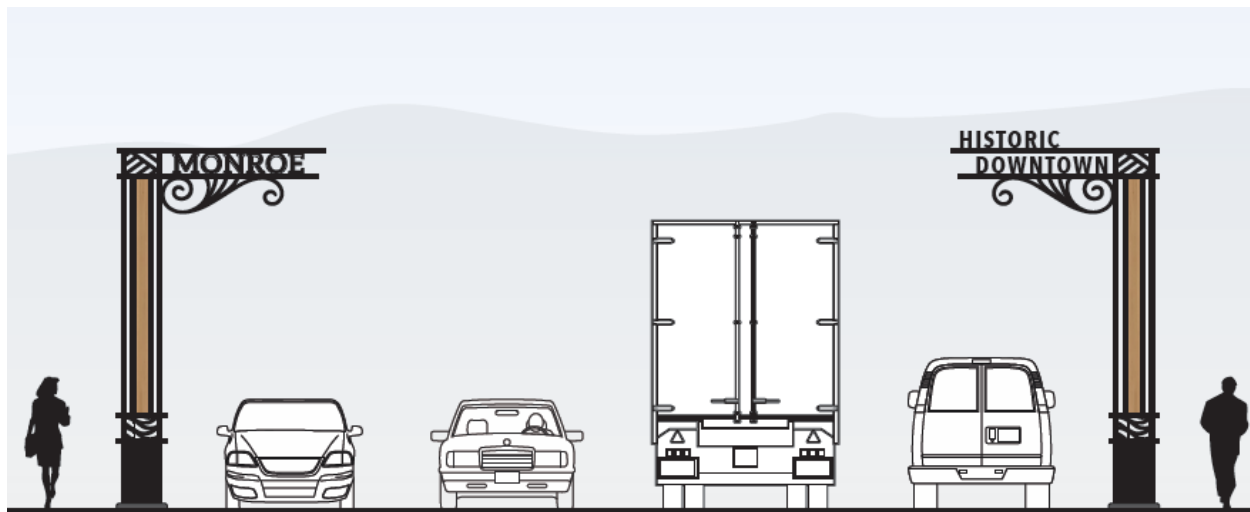
Historic Downtown Gateway and Wayfinding Signs

During development of the wayfinding sign design, Tangram took the initiative, at no extra cost to the city, to develop four gateway and wayfinding sign alternatives for Monroe's historic downtown.

The four proposed designs draw on the area's architectural elements such as wrought iron, columns, i-beams, and Victorian trim. Board members were drawn to several of the designs that featured wrought iron. The rendering below shows Concept 2.



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Freestanding District Identification

FISCAL IMPACTS

TIME CONSTRAINTS

ALTERNATIVES